



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 27, 2013

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly shares Thanksgiving message



Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly addressed chapter officials and staff during the recent Navajo Division of Transportation Chapter Work Session in Albuquerque. President Shelly wishes all a happy and safe Thanksgiving holiday. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK—Yá'át'ééh Keshmesh Yazhi!

Happy Thanksgiving. We are all truly blessed to celebrate this holiday season on the Navajo Nation.

Each year, we celebrate Thanksgiving with a big feast and reflect upon the many blessings in our lives. We are given time off from our jobs to celebrate the holiday with family. Thanksgiving is a time of family, friends, food and football.

Let us not forget the many brave Navajo men and women who cannot be with us today because they are out in the world, defending our freedom and standing up for our Navajo sovereignty. We salute these Veterans and may they be blessed with a safe return home to Diné bi Keyah. Let us also give thanks to our Navajo Code Talkers, true American heroes that saved the world from war and destruction.

Thanksgiving did not begin

with the pilgrims. Our Native American brothers and sisters have been celebrating the harvest season and its bounties for countless generations spanning back to time immemorial.

The same is true for the Navajo Nation. Our grandmothers and grandfathers gave thanks through sacred prayers and songs that have brought us to where we are today: a thriving tribal nation setting the bar for the rest of Indian Country.

We have much to be thankful for.

Let us give thanks to our Navajo Nation leaders that came before us – Manuelito, Barboncito, Ganado Mucho and others – for they brought our people home from the brink of extinction. Hwéeldi was a harsh experience for our Nation and we lost many lives, but we have persevered and survived the systematic attempt to terminate our language and culture.

Let us be thankful for our beautiful language – Diné bizaad – our shield and protector countering the countless incursions against our people and our land. Let us be thankful for our Navajo Nation, the largest tribal nation throughout Indian Country, at over 16 million acres. Our Navajo Nation grew more than five times the original 3.5 million acres granted to our ancestors, upon their return home from Hwéeldi to our traditional homelands between the Sacred Mountains.

Let us be thankful for the protection of our Sacred Mountains – Tsisnaasjini', Tsoodzil, Doko'oosliid, Dibe' Nitsaa – for keeping us safe and providing us with a point of reference of where we come from and who we are. Let us also be thankful for Dzil Na'oodilii, Ch'oolii, and Naatsis'aan for guidance and reverence in our songs and prayers.

The Navajo people are survivors and we identify ourselves to our Navajo deities every morning when we rise to greet the day with exercise and reverence. Our songs and prayers have brought us from the time of Emergence into the 21st century of today and they will carry us well beyond into the future and guide our children and grandchildren with the ancient wisdom that could never be replaced.

Let us be thankful for our Treaty of 1868, Naltsoos Sani', outlining the trust responsibilities of the U.S. government to our Navajo Nation. We live in a time of sequestration and

budget cuts, but this living, breathing document guarantees the government responsibilities and obligations to our people, regardless of the current economic climate.

Before the conquest of discovery and invasion of the New World, over 100 million Native Americans from hundreds of tribes thrived and lived in North America. Today, there are only 5 million Native Americans in the country. Let us be thankful that we have survived and that we continue to survive the odds that have been stacked against us.

I wake up every day thankful for the Navajo people.

You give me reason to do my very best to represent our Navajo Nation with pride, honor and dignity. I am thankful for you, the voting body of the Navajo people, for electing me as your leader. We will continue down this road of innovation and elevation of our Navajo Nation for the generations to come.

Ahe'hee.

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